



Preparation for Worship: Forever

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeJ14W2IXCw>

The moon and stars they wept
The morning sun was dead
The Saviour of the world was fallen
His body on the cross
His blood poured out for us
The weight of every curse upon Him
One final breath He gave
As Heaven looked away
The Son of God was laid in darkness
A battle in the grave
The war on death was waged
The power of hell forever broken

The ground began to shake
The stone was rolled away
His perfect love could not be overcome
Now death where is your sting
Our resurrected King
Has rendered you defeated

*Forever, He is glorified
Forever, He is lifted high*

Forever, He is risen He is alive, He is alive

The ground began to shake

The stone was rolled away
His perfect love could not be overcome
Now death where is your sting
Our resurrected King
Has rendered you defeated

Forever,

We sing Hallelujah
We sing Hallelujah
We sing Hallelujah
The Lamb has overcome
We sing Hallelujah
We sing Hallelujah
We sing Hallelujah
The Lamb has overcome

Forever.....

Songwriters: Brian Johnson / Joel Taylor / Jenn Johnson / Gabriel Wilson / Christa Black Gifford / Kari Brooke Jobe Forever Lyrics ©
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Hymn: StF 305 Low in the grave he lay Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kown2rxc0M>

Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Saviour,
waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Refrain:

*Up from the grave he arose;
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain,
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

Vainly they watch his bed, Jesus my Saviour,
vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!
Refrain

Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Saviour;
he tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!
Refrain

Prayer : Lord Jesus, we continue to marvel at the Easter story – your Easter Sunday.

All seemed dead and buried. Dreams had turned into nightmares. Evil appeared to have triumphed. Darkness had replaced the light. The fire of hope looked like it had been extinguished. Yet that was just the outside. Beneath the bleak exterior, your Father was at work bringing forth glorious resurrection life.

Today, we worship and we celebrate because we share in your story. We have died with you and been raised with you. Your death is our death and your life is our life. Our sins are forgiven because you have taken them upon yourself. We can freely enter the presence of your Father without condemnation because you chose to bear that condemnation yourself. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Constantly remind us of these truths because we can feel dead and buried, hope-less and in the dark. Help us to see that the love and power displayed by your Father when he raised you from the dead will always stand with us and vanquish those things that daunt us today. **Amen.**

Reading: Mark 16: 9-20

Hymn: Living Hope Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f2FXxDVO6w>

How great the chasm that lay between us
How high the mountain I could not climb
In desperation, I turned to heaven
And spoke Your name into the night
Then through the darkness
Your loving kindness
Tore through the shadows of my soul
The work is finished, the end is written
Jesus Christ, my living hope

Who could imagine so great a mercy?
What heart could fathom such boundless grace?
The God of ages stepped down from glory
To wear my sin and bear my shame
The cross has spoken, I am forgiven
The king of kings calls me His own
Beautiful saviour, I'm Yours forever
Jesus Christ, my living hope

*Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain*

*There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope (Rpt Chorus)*

Then came the morning that sealed the promise
Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence, the roaring lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me
Then came the morning that sealed the promise
Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence, the roaring lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me
Jesus, Your's is the victory

*Hallelujah, ...
Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Oh God, You are my living hope*

Songwriters: Brian Johnson / Phil Wickham © Be Essential Songs, Bethel Music Publishing

Message: "A New Beginning told from A New Ending"

As we continue to reflect upon Easter and the miracle of Jesus' resurrection, I want us to turn to a passage that doesn't make an appearance in any one of the years in our three yearly cycle of lectionary readings. Indeed, in most Bibles it gets sectioned off with a little note questioning its authenticity. This is the final twelve verses of Mark's Gospel and, in a number of the commentaries I've looked at in preparation, it doesn't even get a mention as most commentators seem to feel these are verses tacked on to the Gospel at a later point by someone other than Mark. I do feel a little sorry for the passage as it, nevertheless, is still part of accepted scripture and, therefore, we should receive benefit from giving it our attention.

Let's consider first how the Gospel would end without these verses:

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

That's it. No reporting on to the disciples? No appearance of the risen Jesus? No fitting conclusion to the Gospel. There might be, of course, why the Gospel finishes this way.

- 1) It might be that there was once an ending written by Mark but subsequently it's been lost;
- 2) It might be that for some literary reason unknown to us, Mark actually chose to finish on this rather strange note;
- 3) It might be the case that Mark was no longer able to continue writing, perhaps through being martyred and someone else completed the work.

Whatever the possible reason for the Gospel finishing at verse 8, we can see why somebody else might have felt the need to fill out the ending and, if that's the case, they appear to have done so largely with a whistle-stop tour through stories found elsewhere. We have Jesus' meeting with Mary Magdalene; walking and breaking bread with the two on the road to Emmaus; appearing in the midst of the disciples on that first Easter evening. We have the ascension back to Heaven; the Great Commission, sending the disciples out to make and baptise further disciples and maybe even a reference to Paul's experience of not being harmed when bitten by a poisonous snake on the island of Malta.

All of this is very interesting in trying to understand the passage as a whole but let's get back to the question we asked earlier about the benefit we might gain giving it our attention as a bona fide part of scripture. So, let's give it our attention and, in doing so, I want to say two quick things.

Firstly, there is, within these verses, the theme of belief and unbelief. At first, the disciples are disbelieving. They don't believe Mary Magdalene when she brings her report. They don't believe the two returning from the country. And Jesus confronts that refusal to believe. Maybe there are echoes of a story from earlier in Mark's Gospel. Jesus, with Peter, James and John, returns from the Mount of Transfiguration only to find the other disciples unable to heal a boy. The boy's father asks Jesus to help if he can. *"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"*

The second half of our passage looks forward to what powerfully happens when the disciples do gain that belief in the resurrection of Jesus. It looks ahead to the Gospel being preached to all creation. It looks ahead to people believing and being saved; and to signs and wonders accompanying that work.

I wonder sometimes whether we really do believe fully in Jesus' resurrection or whether we still have some way to go. Do we need to echo the words of that boy's father when he both stated his belief but, at the same time, asked Jesus to help him overcome his unbelief? I think we can believe that Jesus is risen in our heads but that it takes longer to really grasp that truth in our hearts. Forty days after Jesus was risen from the dead, what happened? The Ascension. And what does it say there? That as Jesus was talking with them and then is raised up to Heaven, they worshipped but some doubted. It wasn't a complete disbelief. After all, he was right there in front of him. But they still had some way to go for that truth to completely take over their hearts. As, I fear we do as well. Imagine how this world might be powerfully different if every Christian really did believe in their hearts that Jesus is risen from the dead and lived every aspect of their lives based upon that fact.

Secondly, let's look at our final sentence: *Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.* It's good to be reminded that as we do live out our lives in Jesus' name, we aren't working alone but he works with us. In fact, it might be more correct to say that we are working with HIM. What did you make of that verse about not being harmed if you picked up snakes or drank deadly poison. Believe it or not, there are some sects in America who make this a regular practice, sometimes with fatal consequences. That seems to me very similar to the Devil tempting Jesus to jump from the top of the Temple knowing he will walk away unharmed because angels will catch him. How did Jesus respond to that? Do not put the Lord your God to the test – and that seems to cover activities with snakes and poisons as well. There's a massive difference between seeing miracles happen because we're going about God's work and looking for miracles to happen because we're relying on God to bless our work.

Don't worry. In the Ipswich circuit we're not going to be acquiring snakes or poison any time soon but there is a serious principle here. Let's try to really grasp the fact that Jesus is risen from the dead which means that he is with us now and always – working with us and confirming his word, as Mark puts it. And let's make sure we get things the right way round. It always works out best to seek the work that Jesus is wanting to do and join in with that, than to go on ploughing our own furrows hoping that Jesus will bless them anyway. Again, how powerfully different this might be if we believed fully that Jesus is risen from the dead and then if our work aligned with his work.

Hymn: Hymns and Psalms 770 Go forth and tell Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0Fj3b6n5mE>

Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take;
proclaim Christ Jesus, saviour, Lord, and king,
that all the world his worthy praise may sing.

Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;
he will in grace respond to all who call:
how shall they call if they have never heard
the gracious invitation of his word?

Go forth and tell where still the darkness lies;
in wealth or want, the sinner surely dies:

give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
a love like yours which cares for all mankind.

Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:
share God's good gifts let no one be denied;
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,
your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.

Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!
go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;
go till all nations his great name adore
and serve him, Lord and king for evermore

Prayer of Intercession : *(inspired by John 20:19-31; Acts 4:32-35 and suggested by re:Worship)*

The Lord calls us to draw close and examine the wounded hands and feet of the Risen One and to know the depth of his love for us. Let us therefore approach the throne of God in confidence as we pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Lord our Father, as Jesus entered the locked room to show his disciples the beginning of a new world, so enter our hearts and move us to faith in Jesus as the Risen One. Convince us of the reality and significance of the resurrection, and free us from all manner of fears and phobias. Give us courage in the face of death, knowing that this is the gateway to new resurrected life for those who trust in Christ.

Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Be with your church throughout the world so that its preaching and works of love may continue to testify to our Lord's resurrection. Wherever your church is faithless and lacking in courage to do the work that Jesus has given, visit it and build it up with your Spirit. Be with all our pastors so that they may listen well and then speak with Christ's authority.

Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Bring peace to all parts of the earth. Wherever nations are at war and people are divided, visit and bring true reconciliation. Especially protect all Christian people in these nations, and help them to influence their country for the good of all.

Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Wherever homes are disrupted by anger and bitterness, and wherever relationships are distorted and dulled, visit and bring peace and harmony. Wherever young people are gathered in your name, visit and guide them with your holy word and wisdom.

Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Visit and comfort the sick and suffering too, dear Lord. Heal and strengthen weak bodies, calm and correct confused minds. We pray for those we know with particular needs including (insert names). Support them all with your great love and mercy, and be with those others known to us and whom we now name in our hearts...

Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we present these prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is risen from the dead, and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

from the Lutheran Church of Australia's LCA Worship Planning Page.

The Lord's Prayer : Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn: StF 313 Thine be the glory Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tiz4yXUJrgU&t=2s>

Thine be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment
rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes
where thy body lay:

Refrain:

*Thine be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo, Jesus meets us,
risen from the tomb;

lovingly he greets us,
scatters fear and gloom;
let the Church with gladness
hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord now liveth,
death hath lost its sting:

Refrain

No more we doubt thee,
glorious Prince of Life;
life is naught without thee:
aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors
through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan
to thy home above

Refrain